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ABSTRACT

This guide to studying at the Open University concerns the problems of independent learning for the adult student. Working effectively as a student requires clear and realistic goals, support from close contacts at home and work, a business-like approach, and a desire to learn. Study techniques covered are when and where to study, how to read better and more quickly, how to make useful notes, how to learn from television and radio broadcasts, how to write essays, how to prepare for and take examinations, and how to find out about using the library. Suggestions are offered on using regional tutorial services and the study center and on learning from discussion groups. Instructions and an exercise are provided to introduce the student to completing the special forms for computer-marked assignments (CMAs). Information is provided on scoring systems and processing of CMAs, and a sample computer-marked assignment form is included. Instructions for completing tutor-marked assignments and a sample form are provided. (SW)

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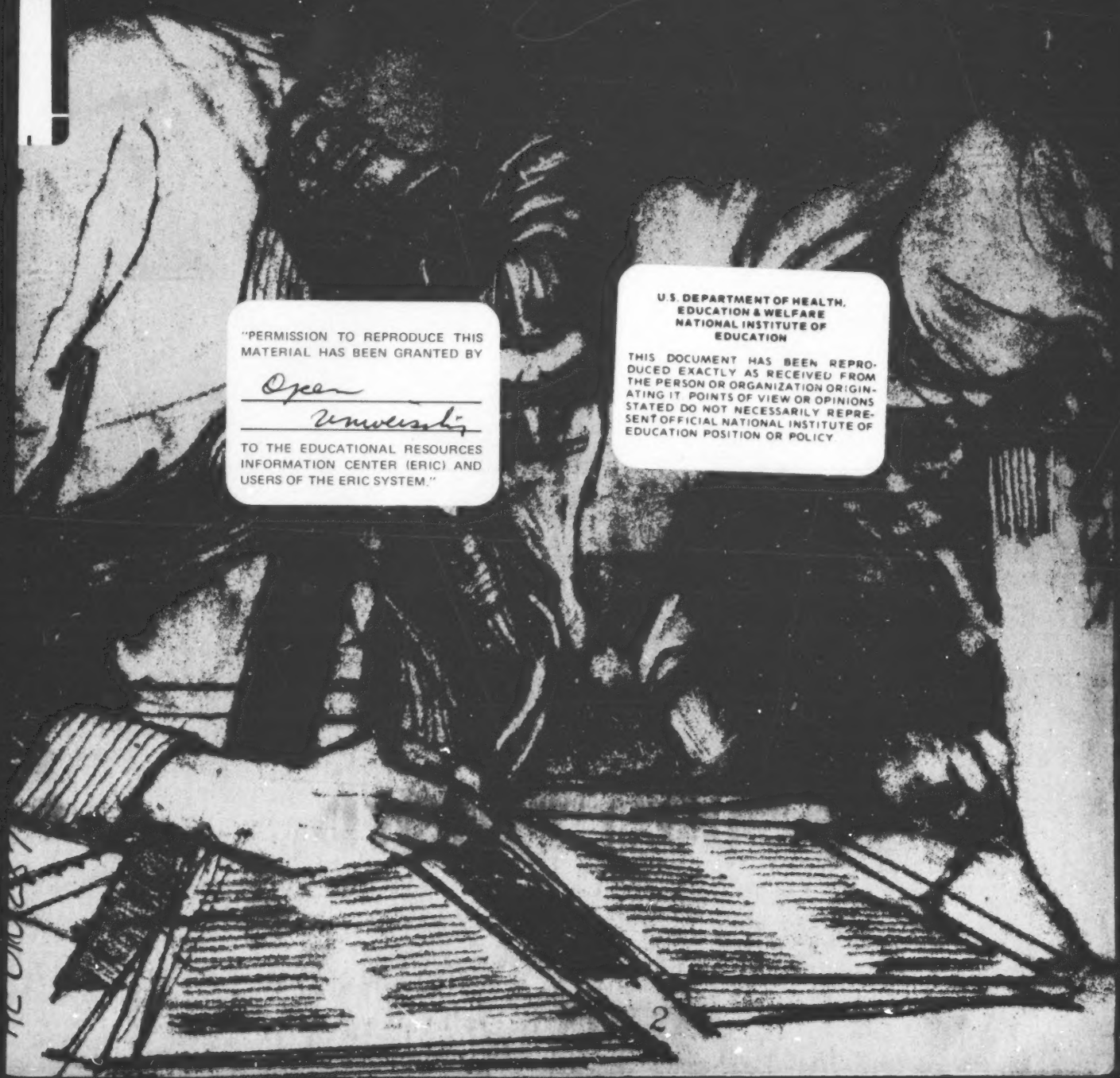
The Open University

HOW TO STUDY

A Guide to Studying at the Open University



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The Open University

HOW TO STUDY

A Guide to Studying at the Open University

This guide is published for use in conjunction with the *BA Degree Handbook 1976* and the *Post-experience Student Handbook 1976.*

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The University wishes to emphasize that, while every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the material in this publication is subject to later alteration or amendment in the light of changes in regulations or in overall policy or of financial or other constraints.

The Open University
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PREFACE

Welcome to the Open University.

We are pleased to have you as a student and we wish you every success in your studies. We hope that this guide will help you get off to a confident start and that you will read it through before you set out on the work for the course you are undertaking.

We have divided it into three sections. The first is concerned with the techniques of effective study. Our intention is not to give you detailed instructions that will transform your studying ability overnight, but rather to start you thinking about study as a job of work with its own particular skills that can be acquired by anyone who wants to do that job well.

The second section gives some advice on how to benefit from particular aspects of the Open University's regional tutorial services.

The third section provides information on the completion and submission of the assignments which you will be expected to send in regularly throughout your course. It includes an introductory exercise which is a 'simulation' of a computer-marked assignment. It will be very valuable for you to practise on the example given in this guide and you should not attempt any of the computer-marked assignments which you are taking until you have completed this exercise.

If you should later come across aspects of study that you wish had been dealt with more fully in this guide, or if you can pass on any useful study advice, from your own experience, please let us know so that your ideas can help to improve the next edition. Your comments should be addressed to Godfrey Woodward, Assistant Secretary, The Open University, PO Box 71, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AG, who is the Executive Editor of *How to Study*.

INTRODUCTION

The Problems of Independent Learning

The Adult Student

What are the problems facing the adult student as he returns to education after a gap of several years? You alone know what looks like being a problem for you, but here are four that are very commonly reported:

1 The adult student may lack confidence in his ability to learn – especially if he has little contact with other students working on the same course.

2 As a result he is fearful of not doing well and feels he will lose face if all his work is not perfect. So he may delay in submitting work for his tutor's comments and guidance.

3 He is anxious about how to combine his studies with the demands of his family, his friends and neighbours, and his employers and workmates. He may feel guilty about spending time shut up alone with his books.

4 He may, quite simply, feel too tired after a hard day's work to settle easily to mental effort.

We cannot just wave a wand and dismiss these problems. For many people they are real and worrying. Here, however, are some positive factors to weigh against them:

1 The adult student has more experience, more knowledge and, above all, more motivation than most other students. He has lost the innocence that lets a youth imagine time is stretching endlessly before him, and he knows that if he wants a more rewarding job or a more fulfilling role in life then there is no time to waste. Even though the adult student may be out of practice he makes up for it with a stronger sense of purpose.

2 While the adult student may find that his memory for facts is not as good as that of younger people, he is likely to be better at grasping and analysing the underlying principles and the relationships between facts. This kind of understanding is far more valuable in higher education than is mere knowledge of facts.

3 Experience in other educational systems based on correspondence tuition suggests that adult students learning at a distance can do just as well as younger students working in a classroom.

4 The Open University student enjoys advantages that are denied to most other students doing undergraduate work by correspondence (and perhaps to most students in conventional universities also): for the Open University is breaking new ground in course planning, in presentation, and in follow-up.

The courses have been carefully prepared with the needs of our specific student body in mind, and then developed and improved by feedback from students taking the course.

Our intention is not that the Open University student should be left to glean what best he can from a succession of dreary lectures or 'study notes'. Your courses are presented imaginatively using modern educational techniques and a stimulating variety of teaching media such as programmed learning, gramophone records, experimental kits and, of course, radio and television.

Open University students will rarely get a chance to feel forgotten about or isolated. With the help of the computer we shall be keeping track of how you are doing and the tutorial and counselling service will provide you with continuous feedback (and, if necessary, advice) about your progress. Study centres will help you to overcome any feeling of isolation by giving you the opportunity to meet regularly with your fellow students and your tutor-counsellor and course tutor in surroundings where your studies and other matters can easily be discussed. Summer schools and, to some extent, half-day and one-day schools will give you an intensive, university-type timetable of lectures, seminars, and practical work, together with more experience of working and learning in groups with other people.

Working Effectively

What are the secrets of success for an adult student learning at a distance? Clearly, there are none. Study will always be hard and demanding work. There are no tricks, secrets or short-cuts that can make it easy. But what we must aim to do is ensure that your hard work does produce results – that is *effective* and *rewarding* work. To be an effective student you will need:

1 *Clear and realistic goals* Whether you are studying for career advancement to broaden and illuminate your everyday living, or to equip yourself to co-operate more usefully with others, you must identify both short-term and long-term goals that can give urgency to all your work (e.g. completing an assignment, attaining the skills listed as the objectives of a correspondence unit by its author, starting on a new career).

2 *Support from those close to you* You will no doubt have many roles besides that of a student – spouse, parent, friend, employee, etc. When an adult first returns to study it can be a difficult time for husband or wife and for the children. This needs to be faced beforehand, with any necessary re-allocation of duties and responsibilities being openly discussed and decided. If the others share your goals and your progress, the going will be so much easier.

3 *A business-like approach* Many successful students would argue that good organization rather than academic brilliance is the key to good progress in their studies. You will be least anxious about your work if you try to:

(a) Plan what you want to achieve in the next day, week, month, etc.

(b) Stick to your plans, or modify them for good reasons only.

(c) Make the best possible use of every scrap of time available.

(d) Realize that you must sacrifice something in order to find time for the course.

4 *A desire to learn* You will enjoy your studies more if you are able to:

(a) Open your mind and senses to new, perhaps conflicting, ideas and experiences.

(b) Read and write about and discuss questions that may or may not have answers. (And ask them too.)

(c) Look for principles and the basic unifying ideas in a subject.

(d) Establish links between new subject-matter and your own practical experience of the world.

5 *A knowledge of the techniques of effective study* That's what Section One is about. Please read on.

The Time and Place for Study

When to Study

If you are studying for one full-credit course you must have decided already that you can spare *at least* ten hours a week for study (at least twenty hours if you are taking two courses at once). Here are some suggestions for using those hours well:

1 Each time you receive a package of course material, plan out the study sessions you think you will need to deal with it.

2 Every weekend make out a study *timetable* showing where you plan to fit in each of your study sessions for the week ahead, taking account of the times of broadcasts.

3 Try to do some study nearly every day – get into the habit of using odd half-hours as well as longer spells. (You can do a lot of background reading, or preliminary scanning, on a train journey or in a lunch break.)

4 Tackle your toughest work at times when you are at your best – whether this is first thing in the morning, later in the day, or even in the middle of the night.

5 Leave enough free time for recreation (including sleep) and leisure activities. It is important not to let your studies grind you down – or you *and* the studies suffer.

6 Make a note of what you hope to *achieve* in each study session – either in terms of completing some task like an assignment or a section in a correspondence text, or in terms of reaching the objectives specified at the beginning of a course unit by its author.

7 Begin work at the very start of each study session, e.g.

(a) First review what you did in your last session on the topic.

(b) Force yourself to keep concentrating, but

(c) Take a total of five to ten minutes definite break within each hour of study – especially when you are studying for several hours at a stretch. A drink or a quick walk can renew your energy for a further period of study.

(d) End up by reviewing what you have achieved. Did you finish the task? Did you reach the author's objective? If not, what do you plan to do about it?

Where to Study

You possibly won't have a wide choice of places to study, e.g. home, public library, study centre but:

1 Try to find a place as free from distraction as possible – away from television, radio, telephones, record players, etc.

2 Wherever you find to study, try to study always in the same place. Not only does this mean there will be fewer new things to distract you from your work but also, as you build up the habit of sitting in that place to work, you'll find you can switch into a learning mood the moment you sit down. (But don't let this 'place-habit' get so strong that you are *incapable of studying* in other places!)

3 The only equipment you need, apart from books and correspondence materials, is a table, a chair and a good light. Many people find it best to sit up at a table, as they find it difficult to concentrate when sitting back in an armchair.

4 Try to keep your study place warm but not too hot, and let plenty of fresh air in.

5 Let it be known that during study sessions you can't be interrupted. Clearly you will need the goodwill and co-operation of your family in this, but do let your study hours be clear to your friends so that they too will respect your work.

How to Read Better

One very useful approach to studying a correspondence text, or a book, or an article, is known as SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review). There are five steps in this approach:

1 SURVEY the material first to get a general view of what you will then study in detail. (Scan the table of contents, the introduction, headings, emphasized sections, summaries, exercises, and final paragraphs.)

2 Think up QUESTIONS that will give purpose to your study and allow you to read with anticipation (e.g. "Why does the author divide up his material in this way?").

3 READ the material (preferably two or three times quite fast rather than once slowly).

4 Stop after each section of material to RECALL what you have read (and make notes of the main ideas and important details).

5 REVIEW what you have read (and test the accuracy of your notes) by running quickly through the four previous steps again.

During the READ Stage of SQ3R

1 Look for the author's framework of ideas, the plan upon which he constructed the material. (This is often revealed by the headings he uses, showing you which ideas belong with which, or he may have indicated this in some kind of flow diagram.)

2 Pick out the main idea in each paragraph – often contained in the first or last sentence.

3 Look for important details, e.g. proofs, examples, supports for main idea.

4 Don't ignore the author's diagrams and illustrations – they may make things clear where the text does not.

5 Think up your own examples – look for applications in your own experience.

6 Be sceptical. Don't take the author's work on trust. Look for him to justify every statement he makes. (If he doesn't, and the point is an important one, check with another book or fellow student.)

7 Work out what the results would be if theories alternative to the ones you are reading about were true.

8 Don't be afraid to skip paragraphs and whole sections if you can see that they are not relevant to your purpose. (There's no law that says you've got to read every page of a book.)

9 If, after chewing it over for some time, you still find a section difficult to understand, take a break, try to discuss the difficulty with other students or a tutor, or find another author's treatment of the topic, and then come back and read it again – two or three times if necessary.

How to Make Useful Notes

1 It helps to make notes because they:

(a) Keep you *active* – and concentrating (so you learn and remember better).

(b) Provide a written record for revision.

2 Store your notes in a *loose-leaf binder*. This gives you maximum flexibility to rewrite sections of your notes and rearrange them in more useful groupings as your understanding of a subject develops. Always file notes together by topic, rather than in the order in which they happened to be written.

3 Some suggestions for writing the notes:

(a) Contents should include:

(i) author's/speaker's main ideas and any important detail;

(ii) the logical structure of his argument (in a diagram where possible);

(iii) any important references he mentions;

(iv) space for adding relevant examples or quotations you may come across later.

(b) Make notes at the *Recall* stage of SQ3R.

(c) Use your own wording – don't just copy down undigested chunks of textbook or speech.

(d) Notes should not be too lengthy – full grammatical sentences are not necessary (or you might as well reread the original). For example, you might need only two or three sides of A4 paper to summarize a correspondence text of thirty to sixty pages. (This page is A4 size.)

(e) Use a skeleton outline form (like these notes) rather than continuous, paragraphed prose.

(f) As for the mechanics of notemaking:

(i) record the source of your notes (e.g. a book, a correspondence text) and the date on which you wrote them;

(ii) use loose-leaf paper of A4 size;

(iii) write clearly or type;

(iv) use logical and memorable layout on the page, e.g. new page for each set of notes – label clearly; leave plenty of space and wide margins; use colour, diagrams, capitals, underlining, etc. for emphasis;

(v) use lettering, numbering and indentations (as in these notes) for sections and subsections;

(vi) work out a set of useful abbreviations for words common in your subjects – any kind of personal shorthand;

(vii) make use of such standard abbreviations as these:

e.g.	for example
i.e.	that is
cf.	compare, remember in this context
NB	note well, important
=	equals, is the same as
≠	does not equal, is different from
<	less than
>	greater than
∴	therefore
∵	because

If you are at all worried about the usefulness of the notes you are making, your tutor-counsellor or course tutor may be able to help you. Also, if possible, compare your notes with those made by other students.

How to Read Faster

Most students spend a great deal of time working on books and other printed materials. They would be able to use this time more effectively if they could read faster. And the truth is that most people could read at least half as fast again, and still understand just as well. Slow readers tend to read one word at a time, often mouthing the words as they do so, and to take frequent glances back at words they have seen already. Some read so slowly that by the time they have got to the end of a paragraph, or even a sentence, they may have forgotten how it began. Here are five ways you can start helping yourself to read faster:

1 Have your eyes tested – many people turn out to need reading glasses for continuous study.

2 Make sure you don't mouth words or say them aloud as you read.

3 Try to read in 'thought-units' (two or three words at a time) so that your eye stops only three or four times in a line of print instead of at every word.

4 Build up your vocabulary by:

(a) Reading widely.

(b) Using a dictionary whenever new words crop up in your reading, noting new words.

(c) Making glossaries of words commonly used in your subjects.

5 Practise reading faster (force yourself):

(a) Time your reading of magazine articles of known length – and test your recall of the contents.

(b) Read all your study materials faster, even if you have to read them more than once.

The aim is to be able to *vary* your reading speed according to the complexity of the material and the purpose for which you are reading it. If you are simply trying to get the overall gist of a piece of narrative-type writing you should be able to read two or three times as fast as when you are trying to unravel the detailed development of a complex argument. But even when the material is very difficult you may benefit from scanning it through quickly first before you get down to reading it more intensively. Don't expect every piece of text you look at to yield up its full meaning the first time you read it. You may have to go through it several times. But several rapid readings will probably give you greater understanding, and take less time, than a single, painstaking perusal trying to assimilate all the points made.

How to Learn from Television and Radio Broadcasts

The television and radio programmes are important elements of your course. They do not simply repeat work you have done already in the correspondence material. Instead they tackle a problem from a different angle, using techniques and resources that are not available in print. Through television and radio you can 'experience' a laboratory experiment, or a scene from *Hamlet*, or a civil rights demonstration, with an immediacy that is impossible in print.

How can you make sure of getting the best out of television and radio presentations? In general, try as far as you can to apply the SQ3R technique (see p. 7) with 'listen' or 'watch and listen', replacing the 'read' step. Specifically:

1 Check the subject of the broadcast beforehand and try to do some preliminary reading and *thinking* about it. (Take special note of all references to it that appear in the week's correspondence materials – you may find it introduced or outlined in a special supplement.) You'll benefit most from a broadcast (as you would from a lecture) if you already know something, however little, about the subject matter, and if you have *questions* in mind that you would like answered.

2 Pay close attention to what is said (or shown) – especially the presenter's opening and closing words. Look out for 'signpost' words and phrases like 'therefore', 'on the other hand', 'firstly', 'secondly', etc. Try to distinguish between *fact* and *opinion* and to identify the source of all opinions stated. Make a mental note of points that are not proved or are unclear. You may be able to check them in your reading or by discussion at your study centre or summer school.

3 Try to pick out the main line of argument in the programme: what are the main ideas? What is the presenter getting at? (Don't pay such attention to details that you lose the overall thread.)

4 Make a *few* key notes – just enough so that after the broadcast you can recall the main line of argument together with any supporting detail. Remember that while you are actually writing a note you can't be giving your full attention to what is being said, or to what is being shown on the television screen.

5 Immediately after the broadcast, with your notes in front of you, try to *reconstruct* the programme in your memory. It may help you to try giving an account of the broadcast to a friend or a member of your family. The longer you leave this first attempt to recall, the less likely you are to do it successfully. Make corrections or additions to your notes where necessary.

6 If you are not happy about your memory or understanding of the broadcast, try to catch the repeat presentation or discuss it with other students if possible. Many a broadcast will be worth watching or hearing again even when you did understand it the first time. Ask for or arrange a study centre viewing or listening session with other students.

7 Needless to say, none of the above will yield worthwhile results unless your radio and television sets are in good condition and properly adjusted. You must be able to hear, or hear and see, clearly and without strain. If you are getting poor reception on your home equipment, seek expert advice: if the equipment at your study centre is not functioning properly, tell the person in charge.

How to Write Essays

The writing of an essay or critical report should always be taken seriously. After you've read, heard and talked about a topic you may be full of ideas and impressions, but you will never make this experience your own unless you try to write it down. Only then are you able to make your ideas precise, to weigh them up, to select and reject, and to organize them into a coherent pattern of your own. Essay writing thus gives you vital practice in 'sorting it out' as well as 'taking it in'. Here are a few guiding principles.

1 Be sure you know the precise subject and the kind of treatment that is called for. (Beware of being irrelevant.) Note any restrictions stated in the course material as to length, e.g. 500 words or 1,500 words.

2 Investigate all probable sources of information: books, articles, correspondence materials, radio and television notes, etc.

3 Select the most useful and relevant of the information available.

4 Write a logical *outline* for your essay, e.g.

(a) Introduction – comment on subject and the treatment your propose.

(b) Main body – argument in three or four main ideas.

(c) Conclusion – summary and final comment.

5 Some students find it helpful to write a preliminary draft of the *final* paragraph at this point – so as to give the essay a clear target.

6 Write the *first draft* of your essay:

(a) Write simply and directly, remembering that someone else has to understand what you are trying to say.

(b) Use illustrations (graphs, diagrams, etc.) if they will save words.

(c) Take care to acknowledge ideas borrowed from other authors.

(d) List the sources you have referred to for information.

7 *Rewrite* the essay (if possible, after a gap of a few days) to eliminate weakness of content or treatment. Check the wording of the assignment topic again to see that you have taken the full sense and have written to the point.

8 Use the same size loose-leaf paper as for notes (A4) so that essays and notes can be filed together for revision.

9 *Leave plenty of space for teaching comments*, e.g. 5 cm margin and perhaps slightly more at the bottom of each page. In correspondence tuition it is often extremely useful to write an immediate thought or suggestion alongside or underneath a particular paragraph of a student's essay so that the end product is a written dialogue of student statements and tutor response. This is almost always preferable to the bald summary at the end of an assignment.

Lay in a stock of carbon paper and get into the habit of never parting with a piece of work unless you have a copy.

Generally, the writing of assignments gives you the chance to develop your powers to structure an argument, construct a coherent account, analyse evidence and to give pointed examples to someone who knows about the subject area you are writing on. The primary teaching function is to advise you on how to improve your written work. It is best to take this as an interchange of ideas in writing and allow yourself to write freely and openly. In this way your confidence and understanding grows and grading becomes an incidental record of your general progress.

How to Deal with Examinations

In the Open University, continuous assessment should relieve you of much of the stress that is often brought on by examinations. Nevertheless, an examination does form an important part of your assessment and there is no reason why you should not do well in it if you have conscientiously followed the course. Examination success depends partly on technique in the examination room but more on thorough preparation in the months leading up to the examination.

For Effective Preparation

1 Study *systematically* from the time you begin your course.

2 (a) Begin revising at the end of the first week. Every time you attempt to recall what you have learned you will be making future learning easier.

(b) *Space out* your revision so that you do a little each week.

(c) Revise in such a way that you put the emphasis on recalling ideas (rather than merely recognizing them in your books).

(d) Criticize and rewrite your old notes, looking for all possible *memory links* between subjects and topics.

(e) If, among your previous assignments, there are questions you didn't tackle at the time, write outline answers for them now.

(f) If practicable (perhaps through your study centre) get together with, say, three or four other students taking your course and form a *revision syndicate*. Then you'll be able to do some of your revision through discussion and comment on one another's work.

3 Check through previous examination papers, if available, and (preferably in co-operation with other students) think up some possible examination questions of your own, and then:

(a) Write outline plans for answers.

(b) Write complete 'model' answers.

(c) Give yourself 'mock' exams, under realistic conditions, setting a time limit and allowing yourself no books or notes.

(d) Discuss some of your answers with other students or your tutor-counsellor.

4 On the day before an examination:

(a) Do *not* try to learn new things.

(b) Revise normally or relax completely.
(c) Gather examination equipment.
(d) Go to bed early.

Technique in the Examination Room

1 Take time to read right through the examination paper and decide exactly what you have to do and which questions you prefer. Above all, make sure you know what the questions are really asking for – don't try to distort them into the questions you wish had been asked. If part of the examination consists of an objective test, make sure you understand how you are to record your responses to the questions.

2 Budget your time by allowing so much per question and ten minutes at the end for checking.

3 Plan your answers by jotting down the main ideas and important details in outline form. (Many students prefer to outline *all* their answers before writing any up.) If you are short of time, these notes by themselves will earn you some marks.

4 Keep a sense of *priorities* – answer your 'best' question first, stick to your time budget, and concentrate on the main issues.

5 Write simply, directly, and to the point; watch your grammar and spelling; write legibly.

6 If, as you write, an idea crops up that you can use in a later answer, make a note of it somewhere.

7 When you have finished writing, *check through* all your answers to make necessary corrections.

Using Libraries

In the first years of your studies you may find that you seldom have time for individual work in a library, since your course units take up all your available time. As you move to more advanced levels you will find that the systematic use of the literature of your subjects becomes more important.

The ability to use a library effectively is also of practical value outside your Open University course, since libraries form our chief link with the body of knowledge on which civilization depends. It is worth spending time on learning how to use them.

A library is a complicated tool to use. Like any other tool it can only be used effectively if you have the necessary skill and knowledge. Naturally you won't learn how to use a library simply by reading the next few paragraphs but at least we can indicate the steps you'll have to take in order to teach yourself.

If there is a printed guide to the library you wish to use, obtain a copy and read it carefully. The guide will explain such matters as:

Hours of opening.

Scope of the library.

Layout of the library.

Catalogues and how to use them. It saves your time and that of the library staff if you can use the catalogues for yourself.

The classification used for the books.

Bibliographical services available, e.g. abstracts, indexes, bibliographies, catalogues.

How to consult or borrow a book.

How to reserve a book not immediately available.

How to obtain photocopies of documents.

If no printed guide is available, ask the librarian to explain the library services to you.

To use a large library properly you may need to know all the things mentioned above. A small library may be used more informally, since its scope is limited.

The library staff are there to help you, but remember, when you ask for assistance, state your need clearly and specifically so that the librarian will know exactly what you have in mind.

Finding Out More About Studying

Naturally we don't expect you to have read, learned, and inwardly digested everything just from one inspection of these brief notes on study technique. However, we hope they have encouraged you to start examining your own study technique and asking yourself how you can make it more effective. Please don't forget about the existence of these notes. We hope that you will return to them occasionally during your course: you should find they become increasingly helpful as you get further into your studies.

In this section it has been possible merely to *mention* some techniques of effective study. These techniques are developed in greater detail, with examples and practice items, in the 'programmed learning' book on which this section has been based: *Learn How to Study* by Derek Rowntree published by Macdonald as a paperback at 35p.

USING THE REGIONAL TUTORIAL SERVICES

2

(Post-experience students should read the *Post-experience Student Handbook* for guidance on the extent to which the University is providing local support services for any particular course.)

What is available ?

The regions in the Open University attempt to involve you in the corporate life of the University by providing for your individual needs. Your regional staff accomplish this task in many ways: through the services of your regional office, the part-time staff members to whom you are allocated and through organized meetings with your fellow students. These services ensure that you are not merely one of a thousand watching the same broadcast or reading the same correspondence text. They are designed to be receptive to your individual needs as an Open University student. Part-time and full-time regional staff aim to work with students as individuals and to see them in small groups in their own localities.

How to Use your Regional Office

Your regional office has members of the full-time University staff who work on your behalf:

1 To recruit, appoint and brief part-time tutor-counsellors and course tutors.

2 To arrange with educational organizations throughout the region for study centre facilities.

3 To keep track of each student's progress and to help with any special requirements of students (e.g. preparation for examinations).

4 To organize a series of summer schools at a particular host university in your region (except for London and Northern Ireland).

5 To keep in constant contact with other parts of the University so that it works in a co-ordinated way, planning ahead, acting and learning from its mistakes.

In most cases the part-time staff who have responsibility for the oversight and support of your studies will be best able to help you in solving study problems since they will have considerable experience of the difficulties facing individual students. If they are not able to solve a particular problem, you should then write to your Regional Director. (You will find helpful advice on who to contact to sort out particular difficulties in the *BA Degree Handbook* or the *Post-Experience Student Handbook*.) Occasionally you will be asked to reply to a communication directly to your regional office but usually the regional office acts as a key link in the chain, receiving and acting on reports from tutor-counsellors and course tutors.

Local Support

Although, as an Open University student you will work mainly at home, the University has established some 260 study centres based on areas of high population and ease of communications. Your local study centre offers you a range of facilities which can supplement some of those available at home. It is also the focal point for your face-to-face contact with your tutor-counsellor.

When you begin your studies as an Open University student you will be assigned to a tutor-counsellor for your foundation course, at your local study centre wherever possible. Your tutor-counsellor is likely to be available on a fairly regular basis at your study centre for face-to-face contact. These sessions will be extremely varied ranging from the strictly academic content of the course to the broader educational context of your position as an effective user of a complex teaching system. As a supplement to this face-to-face contact, and as a substitute if you cannot attend the study centre, contact between yourself and your tutor-counsellor will be maintained by other means, including correspondence and telephone. In addition your tutor-counsellor will normally be responsible for marking and commenting on the tutor-marked assignments which you send him throughout the year, although in some instances, e.g. the science foundation course, specialists might be brought in for particular tuition and assessment. The length and frequency of sessions which tutor-counsellors hold in the study centre vary slightly from region to region but you might expect that your tutor-counsellor will be available for some forty hours in total, spread throughout the year and usually in two-hour sessions. No student is obliged to visit the study centre; for some attendance will be impossible, while for others it will be infrequent. Your tutor-counsellor therefore has an important role to play in maintaining contact outside the study centre by telephone or letter. Occasionally, in special circumstances, he may be asked by the Regional Director to visit a student at home.

Your tutor-counsellor's duties are both varied and complex. He will be concerned with commenting on, and grading the tutor-marked assignments which you will complete at intervals during the year. In this role he will act as both teacher and assessor within the

carefully structured tuition which the University provides through written materials and broadcasts. He will be thoroughly familiar with the foundation course material and his major teaching function for the course will be through evaluation and comment on your tutor-marked assignments which are designed to elicit a response from the student to the course material. In addition he will provide further specific academic guidance through the medium of tutorials at the study centre. It would be wrong, however, to see your tutor-counsellor purely as an assessor and wrong to see him as solely related to the discipline of the foundation course. When you proceed to post-foundation level courses, correspondence tuition will become the responsibility of a specialist course tutor who may, in addition, be available for face-to-face tutorials. Your tutor-counsellor will, however, continue to have responsibility for the broader educational support which you will need. He will remain as your educational adviser and will provide an element of stability and continuity at a local level, in your life as a student. By linking each student at foundation level to a tutor-counsellor and by continuing this association beyond foundation level wherever possible, the Open University has sought to provide a continuous educational support which cuts across disciplines and across faculties.

As you will see, your tutor-counsellor exercises a wide range of functions which he will operate selectively according to your individual needs. He is required to maintain regular records of student contacts, individual student progress and essential information for administrative purposes. He also makes periodic returns to regional offices on various aspects of student progress and study centre activities. He will be prepared to accept and reply to occasional telephone calls or letters from students between November and January, especially if you have to revise your choice of courses following your examination results.

While the general administration of the study centre is the responsibility of the regional office and the host institution, the tutor-counsellor has overall responsibility to ensure that study centre arrangements are working smoothly for the benefit of all students, and, in co-operation with other tutor-counsellors in the centre, to generate an environment which is educationally attractive and beneficial to you.

Learning at a Distance

Correspondence tuition is the central and continuing teaching process in the Open University system. Learning through correspondence does not always come easily to the adult student whose previous experience is almost always of conventional face-to-face teaching. At foundation level your tutor-counsellor is responsible for assisting you in developing this novel method of learning. By the end of your foundation year you should have more confidence and ability to act as an independent learner.

At post-foundation level face-to-face tuition will often be infrequent and will be based on large urban centres with good communications rather than local centres. This conventional programme of tuition might be supplemented, or sometimes totally replaced, by telephone tuition or extended correspondence. It is therefore essential that you should learn at an early date to develop a dialogue with your course tutor through your tutor-marked assignments.

The number of these assignments varies from a norm of four (for most half-credit courses) to between eight and twelve (for full-credit courses). There may also be some variation in the length but whatever the number and length of the assignments, they form the core of your active participation in the course and the basis on which your course tutor may build a continuing teaching relationship. The assignments are an integrated educational exercise to help you understand and assimilate the course material, and in this exercise your course tutor has an important part to play. He is expected to comment in detail on the individual assignment sent to him, to respond to your academic problems and to answer queries. At the same time, of course, assignments are intended to provide evidence to the University of your standard of performance. Thus in assessing your work, the course tutor has to award grades for each assignment submitted and, since these grades count towards a course credit, it is important that he achieves consistency and objectivity.

Your approach towards your tutor-marked assignments is of great importance. If you consider them as regular tests to be merely graded by your course tutor, you will not be making use of the teaching element of the tutor-marked assignments which the University regards as their most important function and you will not be equipping yourself with the skills which are vital for your general education.

At intervals course tutors will be asked to report on the course and on their own and their students' reactions to it. Feedback of this nature is vital to the University in developing and improving these courses and services and the course tutor is in the unique position to provide it.

Allocation to part-time staff

At the beginning of the year the regional office will allocate you to the part-time tutorial and counselling staff who will be responsible for your tuition and counselling throughout the year. If for any reason you wish to be reallocated to a different person (we expect this to happen only in exceptional circumstances), you can request this by writing to your Regional Director explaining the reasons in full. The Regional Director has sole discretion in deciding whether a change is appropriate and possible.

How to Use your Study Centre

The study centre is described in some detail in the current *BA Degree Handbook* and in the *Post-experience Student Handbook*. Your regional office will probably have already provided you with details of your chosen study centre and invited you to a preliminary meeting. Study centres vary, with facilities ranging from the barest classroom to a common room with carpets, curtains, soft lights and armchairs. The principle is the same, however: there is an opportunity to meet other students, to break down the isolation of home study, to put one's own ideas, successes and hurdles into perspective and to raise issues with other members of the University – staff and students. The study centre is not the only place where these objectives can be attained, and we make special efforts to meet the needs of students who cannot come to study centres, but most students find the study centre a valuable meeting place, especially in the early stages of Open University studies.

How to Learn from Discussion Groups

Open University written materials and broadcasts are devised to help you respond as an individual and to become an active rather than a passive student. Every Open University student can 'argue' with or respond to a course writer or broadcaster, if only in the process of writing assignments. Here you can often discover new ideas that you didn't fully contemplate until you put pen to paper. While writing is an essential part of the Open University learning process, discussion has less prominence. But discussion, 'talking over your learning', can add a valuable dimension to your studies. While you put your own point of view and hear immediate responses of full or partial agreement or disagreement, you have the chance to modify and crystallize your ideas in the ebb and flow of discussion. Such discussion with other students is possible as soon as you have made the link with one or more students on the same course, usually at the study centre, at least to start with. There were over a thousand self-help discussion groups in 1975; some lasted throughout the year, some for shorter periods of time, in between tutorials or day schools for example.

How to Make the Most of Discussion

1 It is best to start by clearing away old ideas about educational discussion, for example that all true discussion is either an inspired free-for-all with no shape or form which leaves you happy but none the wiser, or a longish sermon from an expert at the end of which one or two brave souls ask questions and most people leave with incomprehensible notes. Discussion is what you make it.

2 It helps to agree on a rough agenda, e.g.:

(a) a broadcast just seen or heard;

(b) a recent correspondence text that all have read;

(c) aims and objectives of broadcast or text, its methods and examples, its strong and its weak points, its overall achievement or failure;

(d) the discussion – what worked and what didn't work (did the group co-operate, did anyone find it difficult to talk or to stop talking?);

(e) the next session.

If this kind of agenda, or any solid alternative to it, is undertaken, you will find that the discussion can be strenuous and useful.

3 The presence of an 'expert' is not necessarily helpful. Many of us are used to having had figures of authority instructing us in the past. The Open University local discussion group does not depend on such a presence. For one thing, a great deal of expert teaching is already present in written form and in the broadcasts. For another, it is unlikely that there are sufficient experts in every discipline and at every level that the Open University teaches, to staff sessions at all study centres in the United Kingdom. In fact this can be an advantage, for a group discussion at a study centre is almost certainly a failure if the tutor-counsellor or the course tutor has done all the talking.

If one comes to the discussion to talk through and make sense of one's learning, then another student's experience may be just as valuable as another teacher's view. For example, a bank manager and a shop steward in a social sciences discussion group may have just as much to offer in discussion as the teacher who is a part-time Open University course tutor or tutor-counsellor.

4 Wherever possible, sit in a group in which everyone can see each other and feel comfortable. If the group is too large for everyone to have a chance to talk, it might help to split into smaller groups, at least for part of the time, which can then report back to the whole group. A group of six may often be preferable to a group of fifteen, because the smaller group gives the opportunity for each member to play an active part.

5 If you decide that the best way to talk in comfort is to adjourn to a student's home, or a local pub, keep the tutor-counsellor informed. He may know of a student who knows nobody on the same course, or he may take on a new student who moves into the district. He may also be able to help you in your general planning and overall analysis of the discussion sessions.

6 If you have a very shy or over-talkative member of your group, try to help him settle in or settle down. It may sometimes be easier for you to do this than for the 'expert' who is likely to appear as a figure of authority.

7 People sometimes get lost in discussion and feel that they are not getting anywhere, or that it's just a case of the blind leading the blind. Help your group to define its objectives, achievements and difficulties so that everbody sees where you are going and becomes personally involved.

8 Where matters of crucial academic import to the course arise in discussion, and it is agreed that more help is needed, this may be the very issue to relay to the course tutor so that he may take it up in his tutorial. (As tutorials are fairly rare, it is important to clarify agenda topics in advance.)

Different Kinds of Discussion

The kind of discussion group suggested above is one that basically depends upon students. This is because it is the one kind of discussion that can occur for almost all students, even where a student cannot reach the study centre he may be able to receive a visit from other students. As the number of courses expands, from the four very broad courses at foundation level in 1971 to approximately 100 courses by 1977, the chances of direct face-to-face contact of a regular nature at a local level diminish. It is therefore important to learn the skills of successful educational discussion as early as possible, so that purposeful and valuable discussion can continue among students. At foundation level tutor-counsellors initiate discussion groups and help to structure the discussion to begin with; at higher levels they help in the formation of student self-help groups on common courses.

Even at post-foundation level there are a number of occasions for discussion, apart from student based discussion groups. Many Open University course tutors establish good personal relationships with their individual students and formulate their written communications in a discursive vein so as positively to invite a response.

The occasional tutorials are intended to take up matters to do with the course and its assignments that can best be explored in conversation with the group. It helps to come with definite matters to raise with your course tutor and to agree the agenda with other students and the course tutor at the start of the tutorial, so that the maximum number of points that are common to two or more students can be covered. (If everyone raises a different issue, the course tutor may pair off students to help each other, while he comes round each pair in turn.)

Another kind of discussion goes on at summer school, and every student, apart from the tiny minority who have to be granted excusal, has the chance of talking with expert university teachers. More intensive conversation with students is possible in the dedicated atmosphere of a residential summer school on a university campus. This last kind of experience is probably all the more successful when students have already taken part in well organized educational discussions with other students and part-time staff.

COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

3

Computer-marked Assignments (CMAs)

The Assignment Form

A supply of the special forms for the completion of computer-marked assignments will be provided by the University together with pre-addressed envelopes for their return to the University. They will be included in the stationery pack which will be sent to you in good time before the first assignment is due. The form requires careful folding along the dotted line before you post it.

Completing the Assignment Form

Computer-marked assignments will be made up of objective questions where you are asked to select answers from given alternatives. You will record your answers on a special form by crossing out with a pencilled line, numbers or letters in various parts of the form. This form is fed directly into a document reader, which converts your pencilled 'mark' into symbols understood by the computer. This section is devoted to an introductory exercise (which starts below) that is a 'simulation' of a computer-marked assignment and which will teach you how to use the special Open University CMA form. When you have completed this exercise you should be able to:

1 Make the correct mark on cells of CMA forms for the University computer to detect.

2 Understand the use of computer-marked assignment (CMA) forms by:

(a) being able to define or illustrate the terms:
CMA form, CMA question paper, answer cells, comment cells, preferred response, non-preferred response, rows and columns in blocks, and parts 1, 2 and 3 of CMA forms;

(b) responding easily to objective questions by marking indicated answer and comment cells on an assignment question paper;

(c) copying correctly marks from cells on an assignment question paper onto the corresponding cells on a CMA form.

You should not attempt any of the computer-marked assignments for the course or courses which you are taking until you have completed this exercise.

This exercise is followed (p. 23) by a few notes on the way the forms are scored by the University computer.

Page 24 contains a summary of the instructions for completing CMAs.

The Open University Computer-marked Assignment E10041 (Introductory Exercise on CMA)

Make a note alongside of the time at which you start this exercise.....

Take one of the CMA forms from the supply which will be sent and place it beside you. You will need to use it throughout this exercise. *(See example on p. 25.)*

Note 1

The CMA form is in three parts:

Part 1 for recording your serial number, the assignment number, date sent, and your name, initials and address.

Part 2 for recording answers to assignment questions.

Part 3 for recording answers to general questions on the assignment as a whole.

Each part of the form is subdivided into blocks, made up of cells. Thus part 1 has three blocks (one for serial number, one for assignment number, and one for 'office use'). Part 2 has six blocks. Part 3 has three blocks.

Note 2

Since the computer cannot read handwriting, we can't ask you to *write* answers on the form. Instead, you will be asked to record all necessary information by pencilling out letters and numbers that are already printed on the form. These 'pencillings out' will form a pattern that the computer can read and respond to.

You record information on the form by pencilling out the number or letter in a given *cell*; in the block below, 'A01312' has been pencilled out:

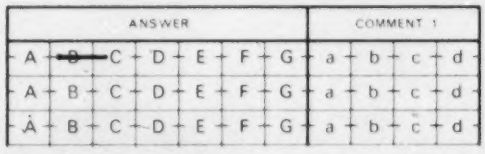
To make marks on the form you must use an HB pencil. You should draw a continuous horizontal line between the edges of the guidelines shown and through the number or letter which you wish to record. e.g.:

Note 3

When a completed form is processed by the computer, each cell is searched for a mark. All marked cells are recorded.

It is therefore important that, in marking a given cell, you should not go outside the boundary of that cell.

The mark below, although obviously intended to indicate cell B in row 1, could well be read by the computer as indicating cell C in addition.



If you make a mistake in indicating a cell on the form, you can try to erase the mark. If, however, such erasing causes a dark smudge, or tears the surface of the paper, you should start again with a new form.

How to Complete Part 1

Write your serial number, name and initials, the number of this assignment (E10041), the date, and your address in the left hand box of part 1 of the form.

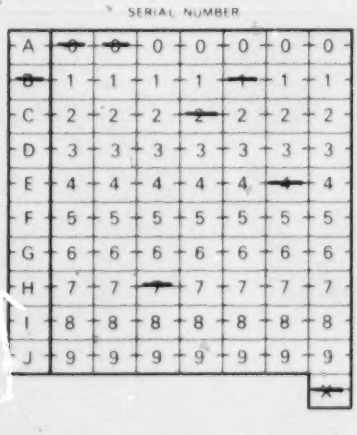
(In the event of incomplete entries in the remainder of part 1, this would allow someone at Walton Hall to trace the sender of the form.)

Now look at the student serial number block in part 1.

Note 4

To record your serial number, you pencil out one cell in each of the eight columns, corresponding to the characters in your serial number.

For example, if your number was B007214X, your entries in the block would be as shown below.



You use the first column for the first character of your number, the second column for the second character and so on.

Remember that your serial number has *eight* characters, and to indicate it you should pencil out one character in *each* of the columns in the serial number block, even if one of the characters is an 'O'. Errors made in recording your serial number could lead to your not receiving a grade for the assignment concerned.

Now record your own serial number on the CMA form.

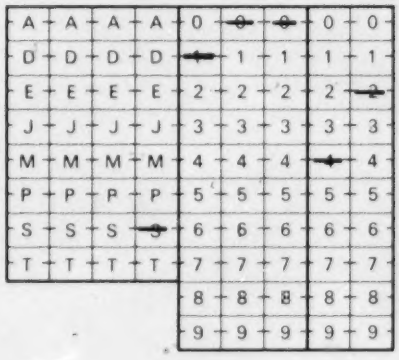
Look at the assignment number block to the right of the serial number block on part 1 of the CMA form.

Note 5

To record the number of the assignment, you mark the cells in the block corresponding to the digits in the assignment number. The letter (or letters) at the beginning of the assignment number identify the faculty (or faculties) producing the course, the following three numbers the course, and the final two numbers, the assignment.

If the assignment is for a single faculty course – i.e. S100 42, you should leave *the first three columns blank* and pencil out the S in the *fourth* column, then one number in each of the following columns, corresponding to the remaining five digits.*

S100 42

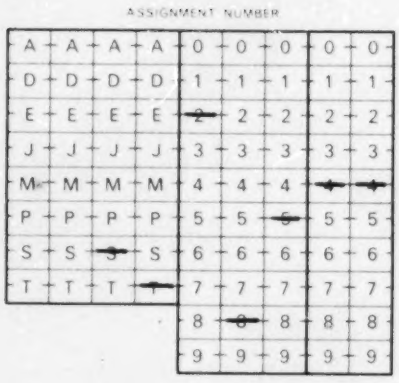


If the assignment is for an inter-faculty course produced by two faculties (e.g. ST285 44) you should start in the *third* column.

*For science half-credit courses made up of one-third and one-sixth credit course components, the complete combined number must be entered, e.g. S232 41 should be entered, and *not* S23-41.

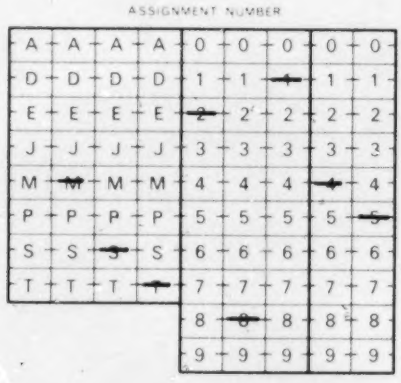
19

ST285 44



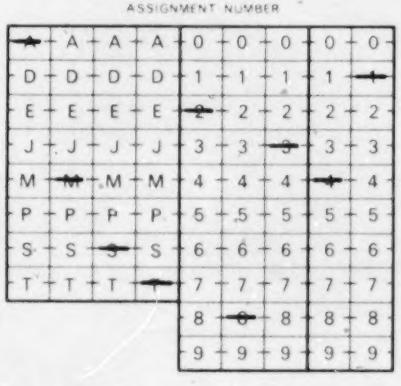
For one produced by *three* faculties (e.g. MST281 45) you should start in the *second* column.

MST281 45



For one produced by *four* faculties (e.g. AMST 283 41) you should start in the *first* column.

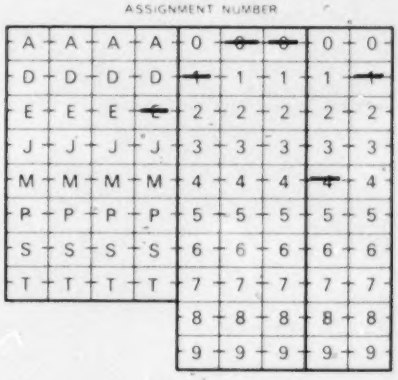
AMST283 41



Now record the number of this assignment (E100 41) in the assignment number block on your CMA form.

(We are using this number for convenience sake for this 'dummy' assignment – as you will have noticed, it is really one of the Educational Studies Faculty (E) numbers, but as there is no foundation course in educational studies, we have borrowed it to identify this exercise.)

Your entry on the form for the assignment number for this exercise should be identical to the one shown below; if it is not, go back to Note 5 and start again.



How to Complete Part 2

Look at Part 2 of the CMA Form

Note 6

You will see that there are six *blocks* (BLOCKS U, V, W, X, Y and Z) in Part 2 of the form. Each block has seven *rows* (numbered 1-7); each row has seven *answer cells* (upper case letters A-G), which are used to indicate an answer to a question, and four *comment* cells (lower case letters a-d), used to indicate a comment on a question. In addition, at the bottom of each block there are two further comment sections – comment 2 (lower case letters a-g) and comment 3 (lower case letters a-d).

Each *question* in a CMA paper is identified by the block letter and row number used to answer the question. Thus Q.U1 would be answered by pencilling out one or more cells in row 1 of Block U. Since it has seven rows, Block U (like all the other blocks) could accommodate up to seven questions (Q.U1-Q.U7).

In some assignments, you may be asked to select a comment (e.g. on degree of difficulty, or time taken) for a given question (using comment 1 cells) or for the questions in a block as a whole (using comment 2 and 3 cells). The *only* comment which may be taken

into account in calculating your score is that on degree of confidence – and then only when you are told so in the relevant question. Otherwise, comments are for our assistance in continuous course development. However, if you do *not* record a comment (be it confidence, difficulty, or whatever) for a question *on which a comment is requested*, you run the risk of having your form rejected (and therefore not getting a grade) as a result of the computer's error checking routine.

Note 7

If, when you are doing a computer-marked assignment, you find that you do not know the answer to a given question, and are not prepared to hazard a reasonable guess, you must not 'skip 'the question. Instead, you should record a 'don't know' response. To do this, for a question which uses one line only, you pencil out the 'd' cell in the comment 1 section for that line, leaving all the other cells blank. For questions that use more than 1 row, you pencil out the 'd' cell in the comment 1 section of the first row in the question.

Note 8

In answering questions in a computer-marked assignment, you are advised in the first instance, to pencil out the cell(s) corresponding to your answer(s) in the facsimile block from part 2 of the form reproduced alongside each question on the actual question paper. The cells to be used in answering questions in a given block will always be outlined on the facsimile block. When you have checked your answer, you can then transfer it to the actual CMA form.

Q.U1-Q.U4 below each consists of a statement concerning the Open University CMA form. You are to decide for each question whether the statement given is:

A: True or B: False

(Answer each question by pencilling out either A or B in the appropriate row of Block U shown; if you are unable to answer a given question, pencil out 'd' in the appropriate comment 1 row.)

Q.U1

Part 1 of the CMA form is used for answering assignment questions. *(Use row 1 of Block U shown.)*

Q.U2

Part 3 of the CMA form is used for indicating your name, student number, and assignment number. *(Use row 2 of Block U shown.)*

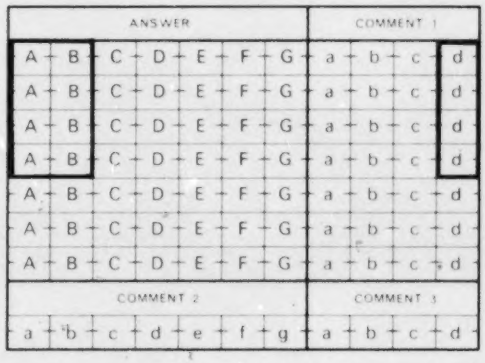
Q.U3

Part 2 of the CMA is used for answering assignment questions. *(Use row 3 of Block U shown.)*

Q.U4

General comments on the assignment should be recorded on Part 3 of the CMA form. *(Use row 4 of Block U shown.)*

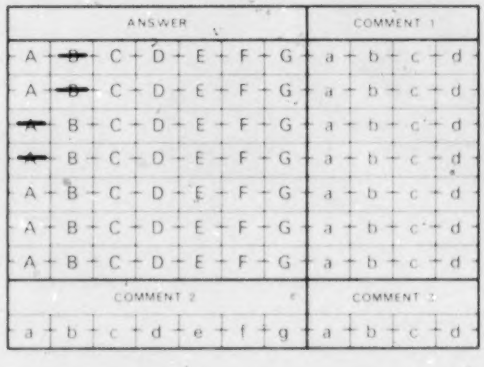
Block U cells for Q.U1-Q.U4


ANSWER
COMMENT 1
1 A B C D E F G a b c d
2 A B C D E F G a b c d
3 A B C D E F G a b c d
4 A B C D E F G a b c d
5 A B C D E F G a b c d
6 A B C D E F G a b c d
7 A B C D E F G a b c d
COMMENT 2
COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g a b c d

Now check your answers to Q.U1-Q.U4 and transfer them to Block U on your CMA form.

Answers to Block U questions.

Your answers to Q.U1-Q.U4 in Block U should be identical to those shown. That is, Q.U1 and Q.U2 were both *false* statements (hence cell 'B' in rows 1 and 2 should be pencilled out), and Q.U3 and Q.U4 were both *true* statements (hence cell A in rows 3 and 4 should be pencilled out).


ANSWER
COMMENT 1
1 A B C D E F G a b c d
2 A B C D E F G a b c d
3 A B C D E F G a b c d
4 A B C D E F G a b c d
5 A B C D E F G a b c d
6 A B C D E F G a b c d
7 A B C D E F G a b c d
COMMENT 2
COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g a b c d

If you made any errors in the above questions, or if you could not answer any of them (and thus pencilled out 'd' in the relevant comment 1 row), you should refer back to Note 1.

Q.V1

Which one of the statements below (A, B, C or D) describes *most comprehensively* the use of the different types of cell within a block?

A: both upper and lower case letter cells can be used for recording a comment.

B: lower case letter cells are always used for indicating an answer.

C: lower case letter cells are used for indicating a comment, and upper case letter cells for indicating an answer.

D: upper case letter cells are used for indicating an answer.

Block V cells for Q.V1

	ANSWER							COMMENT 1			
1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
4	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
5	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
6	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
7	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
	COMMENT 2							COMMENT 3			
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d

(*Pencil out A, B, C or D in row 1 of Block V shown.*)

Indicate your degree of confidence in your answer by pencilling out a, b, c or d in the comment 1 row according to the key below:

KEY a: completely confident
b: very confident
c: moderately confident
d: slightly confident

These comments will be taken into account in calculating your score for this question.

(*If you were unable to answer the question at all, pencil out 'd' in row 1, comment 1.*)

Now check your answer and comment to Q.V1 and transfer them to Block V on your CMA form.

Answer to Q.V1

The 'preferred response' (i.e. the response which is given the highest score) to Q.V1 would be answer C with comment 'a', so the entry for Q.V1 which you just made should be identical to the one shown here.

	ANSWER							COMMENT 1			
1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d

Note 9

When you are asked a question which includes a confidence comment, the comment may be taken into account in calculating your score for that question. (It will be taken into account *only* if this is mentioned in the question.)

For some questions, mainly ones of a factual nature (like Q.V1 above) the preferred confidence comment, that is, the one associated with the highest score, would be 'a' (completely confident). In other words, the highest mark would be given to the correct alternative C combined with comment 'a' and the highest penalty would be assigned to an incorrect answer (A, B or D) combined with comment 'a'. Intermediate scores would be given for the other combinations. However, do not assume that certainty is necessarily always the preferred comment response. In more sophisticated questions involving judgement or interpretation, the correct answer combined with a comment of complete confidence may be scored less highly than when combined with, say, a comment of 'moderately confident'.

When answering questions combined with confidence ratings, you are most likely to maximize your overall score if you record your true confidence in your answer.

Note 10

For each computer-marked assignment, there is an 'error checking routine' built into the system which processes the assignment. This is quite separate from the 'scoring routine' (which identifies correct and incorrect answers) and is designed to pick up technical errors in the way the form has been filled in. There are three main types of technical error which are detected:

1 When the row or rows to be used for a given question have been left completely blank – e.g. not even the comment 1 'd' cell has been pencilled out; this could indicate that the student has missed out the question completely, or has forgotten to transfer his answer onto the form, or has made a mark which was too faint for the machine to detect. Hence the importance of *always* pencilling out the comment 1 'd' cell if you are unable to answer a given question (see Note 7 above).

2 When there is no comment cell marked for a question for which a comment has been requested. Again, this could have happened for reasons similar to those listed under 1 above.

3 When *more than* the indicated number of cells for a question have been pencilled out. For example, if in Q.U1-Q.U4 above both answer cells A *and* B had been marked for the same question, or if cells in rows

5-7 were marked (e.g. in rows for which there were no corresponding assignment questions). This could mean that the student has made a mark which, although meant to cover only one cell, ran over into the next one. Or it could be caused by, say, a coffee stain on the form covering several cells.

In these cases, if any such errors are detected by the machine, the form is rejected by the computer for somebody to check. This leads to considerable delays. In any individual case, at the best it could mean that the student concerned will not be informed of his grade for the assignment; at the worst it could mean that it is not possible to compute a grade at all.

To avoid such errors occurring in your own CMAs, before despatching your completed form to the University, you should check that:

– you have pencilled out the appropriate comment 1 'd' cell for any question you have not answered;

– you have pencilled out a comment cell for questions that ask for comments;

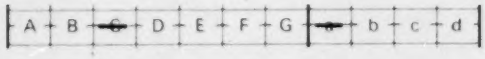
– you have not pencilled out more than the indicated number of cells for a given question (for questions in which the number of answers to be selected is specified);

– you have not marked any cells in rows for which there are no corresponding questions;

– there are no unintentional marks on the form (e.g. stains, smudges, etc.).

QW1 (*Use rows 1-7 of Block W*).

In Q.V1 above, there were four alternative answers to choose from (A, B, C and D) of which you were asked to select one, and indicate a confidence comment. The preferred response was answer cell 'C' plus comment cell 'a' so that row 1 reads as follows:



In this question, we are going to ask you to match seven possible '*responses*' to Q.V1 (numbered 1-7 below) with seven possible *results* (A-G below).

Responses (what the student does)

1 answer cell C+comment 1 cell 'a' pencilled out

2 entire row left blank

3 answer cell A+comment 1 cell 'a' pencilled out

4 comment 1 'd' cell marked only

5 answer cells A *and* B pencilled out+comment 1 cell 'a'

6 answer cell G and comment 1 cell 'a' pencilled out

7 answer cell C *only* pencilled out.

Results (what the computer does)

A *no mark* given – non-preferred (incorrect) response chosen

B *mark* given – preferred (correct) response chosen

C *error* recorded – mark found in a non-indicated cell

D *error* recorded – no comment given but one requested in the question

E *no* error recorded – student has indicated that he cannot answer the question

F *error* recorded – no cells marked at all

G *error* recorded – more than the indicated number of cells marked.

For each of the responses 1-7, select the answer cell letter which best describes the result of the responses, and pencil out that letter in the row corresponding to the responses in Block W shown. For example, the result of response number 1 is B (= preferred response chosen), so you should pencil out cell B in row 1.

If you are unable to answer the question at all, pencil out cell 'd' in row 1 comment 1, and leave all the other cells blank.

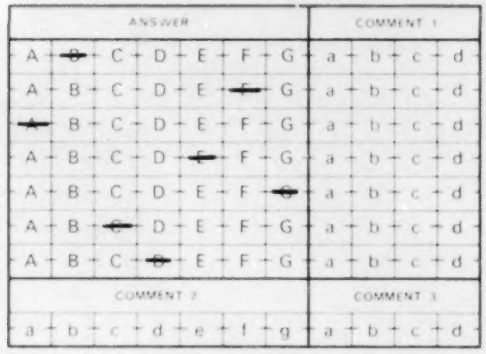
Block W cells for Q.W1

	ANSWER							COMMENT 1			
1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
2	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
4	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
5	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
6	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
7	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	a	b	c	d
	COMMENT 2							COMMENT 3			
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d

Now check your answers to Q.W1 and transfer them to Block W on your CMA form.

Answers to Q.W1

Your answers to Q.W1 should be identical to those shown here. If they are not, re-read Note 10 and check on the reasons for the mistakes you made.



Q.X1 (*Use rows 1-6 of Block X.*)
Make a note of the time here.....

Imagine that you have to complete a computer-marked assignment. From the array of possible activities listed in the Q.X1 array on page 23 select those which you would need to perform. (Don't worry about the order.)

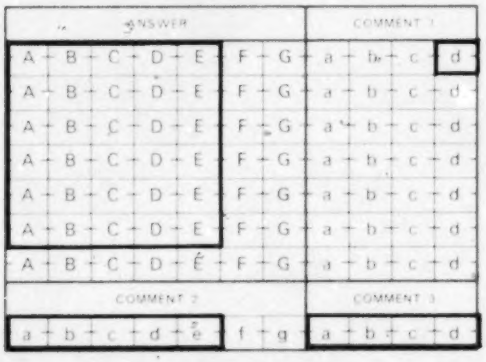
The row numbers and column letters in the array correspond to the answer cells outlined in the copy of Block X shown here.

Select none, one, two or three (no more) of the activities in each row and mark the corresponding cells in Block X shown here.

For example, if you decide that redesigning the CMA form is an activity you would undertake in carrying out an assignment, you would note the row and column identification of the cell in the array (3C) and pencil out Cell C in row 3.

If you are unable to answer the question at all, you should pencil out 'd' in row 1 comment 1.

Block X cells for QX.1



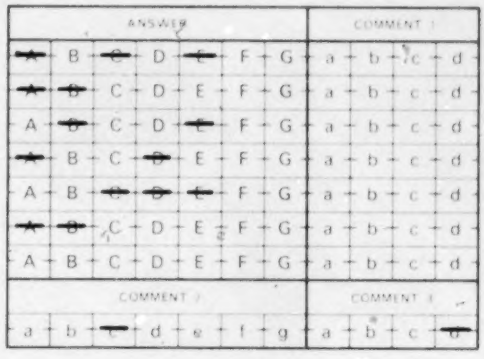
How long did you spend on Q.X1?
(a) less than 1 minute
(b) 1-3 minutes
(c) 4-6 minutes
(d) 7-10 minutes
(e) more than 10 minutes.
(*Answer by pencilling out a, b, c, d or e in the comment 2 box on the copy of Block X.*)

How difficult, overall, did you find Q.X1?
(a) very difficult
(b) fairly difficult
(c) fairly easy
(d) very easy
(*Pencil out a, b, c or d in the comment 3 box on the copy of Block X.*)

Now check your answers and comments to Q.X1 and transfer them to Block X on your CMA form.

Answers to Q.X1

The 'correct answers' to Q.X1 are shown in the block below. The comment 2 and 3 rows have been used to indicate a time of 4-6 minutes (c) and a comment of 'very easy' (d) respectively.



How to Complete Part 3

Now check, for all questions in the exercise, that you have not made any errors in transferring your answers from the facsimile blocks to the blocks on the actual CMA form. Make a note of the time now . . .

Complete part 3 of the CMA form by pencilling out one or more cells for each of the three blocks, following the instructions for this assignment.

Note 11

Part 3 of the form is a request for general information on each assignment which will be of value to us for course development purposes. You will see that there are three single row blocks printed on part 3 of the form. These are used to record your reactions to the assignment. Your correspondence material will tell

Array for Q.X1

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Find the Assignment Question Paper.	Take the dog out for a walk.	Make final check to see that there are no unintended marks on the CMA form.	Write a protest letter to *The Times*.	Mark the appropriate cells on the CMA form.
2	Carry on with the assignment questions until you have finished.	Read quickly through all the assignment questions.	Put on a disguise.	Send a large cheque immediately to the Dean of your Faculty.	Send for the doctor.
3	Telephone the Vice-Chancellor.	Look for special instructions and make sure you understand them.	Redesign the CMA form.	Go on holiday.	Send the completed CMA form back to the OU by the date requested.
4	Fill in your student serial number and assignment number.	Make some coffee or tea.	Call in a TV repair expert.	Complete PART 3 of the CMA form if this is required.	Go out and buy a new hat.
5	Travel at once to Walton Hall.	Apply to play in the qualifying rounds for next year's tournament at Wimbledon.	Check through your answers and comments.	Pencil out the cells corresponding to your answers in each block on the question paper.	Copy your marks accurately onto the CMA form as instructed.
6	Comment on your answers to the assignment questions if required.	Make certain you have a CMA form and an HB pencil.	Take the family for a ride in the car.	Write an essay on higher education.	Pray at the nearest church or chapel.

you how to record your responses. If there is no mention of part 3 in your correspondence material, you should ignore part 3 of the CMA form. In the case of this simulation CMA exercise you are not required to pencil out any of the cells in the three blocks.

You have now completed this exercise. If it had been an actual assignment, you would now be asked to send the completed form back to the Open University by the due date for its return. Special CMA envelopes are supplied for returning CMA forms; you should take care to fold the form accurately along the dotted line before putting it in the envelope. *However, you are asked not to return the form for this exercise.* If you have any remaining doubts about completing the CMA form please consult your tutor-counsellor before returning your first course assignment. You can show your tutor-counsellor the form which you used for this exercise if you think you may not have completed it correctly.

Some Notes on Scoring Systems and Processing of CMAs

Scoring of Assignments

There are basically four different question types (and hence scoring systems) for Open University CMAs.

The first, and probably the one you will come across most often, is the *multiple choice* type. Here you may be asked to select a specified number of items (one or more) from anything from two to forty-nine alternatives (e.g. Q.U1-QU4 and Q.V1 in the exercise you have just completed).

There are several different scoring systems for multiple choice questions. The basic one merely gives

a positive score to each preferred (correct) answer, and zero to any non-preferred ones selected. Then there is facility for *penalizing* any alternatives which are outrageously wrong and which, if chosen by the student, would mean he had completely misunderstood the relevant material. However, this penalty option is used only sparingly. In any case, it is not a strong penalty – i.e. if a preferred response is worth +1, and a non-preferred response zero, then a penalized response might be $-\frac{1}{2}$.

The next basic type of question is a *matching* one (like Q.W1 in the CMA introductory exercise). Here you are asked to match anything up to seven items with seven others.

Then there is the *ordering* type of question, where you are asked to put up to seven items in a given sequence. The scoring system is sufficiently flexible to take into account answers where the majority of items have been placed by the student in the correct sequence, but where one or two are misplaced.

Finally, there is a question pattern which, for want of a better name, we call the *array* type. Q.X1 in the CMA exercise is a (somewhat frivolous) example of this sort of question. Here you are asked to select from a given array a group of items which, taken as a whole, form the answer to the question. You will find on your CMA question paper an indication of the percentage of total marks for the assignment devoted to each block used. The questions within a given block will often be based on a common theme, or be of the same scoring pattern.

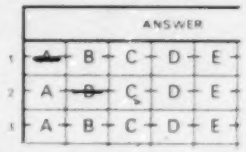
Processing of Assignments

The diagram on page 28 summarizes the operations involved in processing of computer-marked assignments.

Summary of Instructions

1 Use an HB pencil to mark cells on the CMA forms.

2 Pencil out the character in a cell with a horizontal line without going outside the boundary of that cell, as shown below.



3 To answer a question, first mark the cells in the block reproduced alongside the question on the assignment paper. Then, when you have completed the questions for that block, check your answers and transfer them on to the actual CMA form.

4 Do not skip questions; if, for any reason, you do not answer a question, leave its answer cells blank and pencil out the appropriate comment 1 'd' cell.

5 If you wish to alter an entry on the CMA form, erase the original mark carefully, without smudging. If you do mark the form, or damage the surface of the form by using an eraser, you would be advised to start afresh with a new form.

6 Before sending off your completed CMA form, check (a) that you have not made any errors in transferring your answers from the facsimile blocks on the question paper to the actual form; (b) that you have correctly completed Part 1 of the form by writing your name, assignment number, etc. in the left-hand box and have correctly recorded your serial number and assignment number by pencilling out the cells in the other two boxes in this part of the form.

7 Carefully fold the form along the dotted line before inserting it in the envelope provided. Write your name and serial number on the flap of the envelope before you post it.

A Note on Question Layout

Individual questions are numbered by the block letter and row number of the cells of the CMA form used to answer the question.

Thus 'Q.V2' refers to the question answered by pencilling out cells in Block V row 2 of your CMA form.

When a question uses more than one row of answer cells, the number after the block letter identifies the first row used in the relevant block. The subsequent rows are indicated in parentheses. Thus 'Q.W1 (use rows 1-4)' refers to a question which is answered by marking cells in rows 1-4 of Block W.

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

COMPUTER MARKED ASSIGNMENT FORM

CMA

PART 1

SERIAL NUMBER
ASSIGNMENT NUMBER
DATE SENT
NAME, INITIALS, ADDRESS

SERIAL NUMBER

A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
C	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
D	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
E	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
F	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
G	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
H	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
I	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
J	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
							X

ASSIGNMENT NUMBER

A	A	A	A	0	0	0	0	0
D	D	D	D	1	1	1	1	1
E	E	E	E	2	2	2	2	2
J	J	J	J	3	3	3	3	3
M	M	M	M	4	4	4	4	4
P	P	P	P	5	5	5	5	5
S	S	S	S	6	6	6	6	6
T	T	T	T	7	7	7	7	7
				8	8	8	8	8
				9	9	9	9	9

OFFICE USE ONLY

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

PLEASE HANDLE THIS FORM WITH CARE.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO USE AN HB PENCIL

BLOCK U

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

BLOCK V

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

FOLD HERE

PART 2

BLOCK W

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

BLOCK X

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

BLOCK Y

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

BLOCK Z

	ANSWER	COMMENT 1
1	A B C D E F G	a b c d
2	A B C D E F G	a b c d
3	A B C D E F G	a b c d
4	A B C D E F G	a b c d
5	A B C D E F G	a b c d
6	A B C D E F G	a b c d
7	A B C D E F G	a b c d

COMMENT 2	COMMENT 3
a b c d e f g	a b c d

PART 3

A 1 2 3 4 5

B 1 2 3 4 5

C 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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Tutor-marked Assignments (TMAs)

Tuition

Your regional office will notify you of the names and addresses of all the part-time members of staff who will be marking your TMAs and will tell you which assignments each will be responsible for. If you are taking a foundation level course this will normally be your tutor-counsellor, although in some instances, e.g. the science foundation course, specialist course tutors will be appointed for particular sections of the course. At post-foundation level you will retain your tutor-counsellor in his general role as educational adviser but will be assigned to specialist course tutors for assignments and tutorials. You must submit each TMA to the persons appointed for that assignment in accordance with the instructions below.

The TMA Assignment Form (PT3)

You will receive a supply of TMA assignment forms together with envelopes. Further supplies of these forms and envelopes may be obtained by writing to the Manager, Correspondence Services, The Open University, PO Box 50, Milton Keynes MK7 6AE. A specimen of this form is shown on page 27.

Use of the Assignment Form

Once you have completed your TMA you should send it with the assignment form directly to the person responsible for marking and commenting on that assignment. You must send an assignment form, appropriately completed, with every assignment which you submit for assessment. The rule to remember is that you must send one multi-part form with each assignment. Each form must relate to one assignment only, and you must not split your assignment and send the parts separately.

In 1976, as in previous years, the multi-part assignment form will have five parts. The second part will be returned to you with grades and comments. Please comply with the instruction on the form to use a ball-point pen and rest the form on a smooth hard surface. You may, of course, use a typewriter.

You should complete Section 1 of the form only, according to the instructions set out below.

Completing Section 1 of the TMA Form

(a) Write your name and address in the appropriate box. This will show in a window envelope for return to you.

(b) Write your region code in the box for this purpose. Show this as two digits, e.g. 01 for London region, 11 for Scotland etc. (Note that this is your *region* code and not your study centre code.)

(c) Enter the date you will be sending this assignment for assessment; you may want to leave this till last. This date should be the day you actually put your completed assignment into a post-box so that, in most cases, it will be the same date as the postmark.

(d) Enter your tutor-counsellor's name and number. If you have a separate course tutor for this assignment or course, it is important that you do *not* enter his name here. He will fill in his own name and number on the right hand side of the form. You should enter only the name and number of your tutor-counsellor who is the person who has the continuing responsibility and oversight for your academic progress at your local study centre.

(e) Enter your student serial number. Remember that it has eight characters.

(f) Enter the number of the assignment enclosed with the form, and to which the form relates. This number will vary from six characters, e.g. A100 03, up to nine characters e.g. AMST 283 02. Do not enter the letters 'TMA' in front of your assignment number. Please be very careful indeed to ensure that both:

(i) the assignment number is the right one for your written assignment – you should write the assignment number on every page of your assignment along with your name and serial number;

(ii) the assignment number is correctly and fully entered into the box on the TMA form.

(g) This form is essential to the processing of your assignment. Please take care to complete your part of it correctly, fully and neatly.

Sending the Assignment Form

You will be provided with a supply of envelopes for mailing your assignment to your tutor. Address the envelope to your tutor, and write your name and address on the back. Tutor-marked assignments must *not* be sent directly to the University.

Before inserting the form into its envelope with your written assignment, check that you have completed Section 1 correctly and fully, above all, check that you have entered your *student serial number* and the *assignment number*. Without these numbers we cannot record your assignment grade.

Missing Assignments

Assignments may sometimes go astray in the post. *We regret that we cannot accept any responsibility for TMAs which are not received by your tutor or for CMAs which are not received by the Examinations Office.* You should therefore keep a copy of each of the assignments you submit. If you do have difficulties with the post you may wish to obtain a certificate of posting when you send your assignments.

KALAM CONTINUOUS LIMITED /J.E. S2010

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

TMA FORM (PT3)

CENTRAL RECORD

SECTION 1 STUDENT TO COMPLETE

Please use a ball point pen to complete this form, and rest it on a firm surface. Make sure that your complete assignment is sent with this form to your tutor.

Name

Address

Regional Code

Date sent to Tutor

Tutor-Counsellor Name*

Tutor-Counsellor No.*

Student Serial No. 4

Assignment No. 12

Please take particular care to enter these two numbers correctly.

* This should not be your Course Tutor's name and number

SECTION 2 TUTOR TO COMPLETE

Date from Student

Date to Centre

Tutor's Name

Telephone

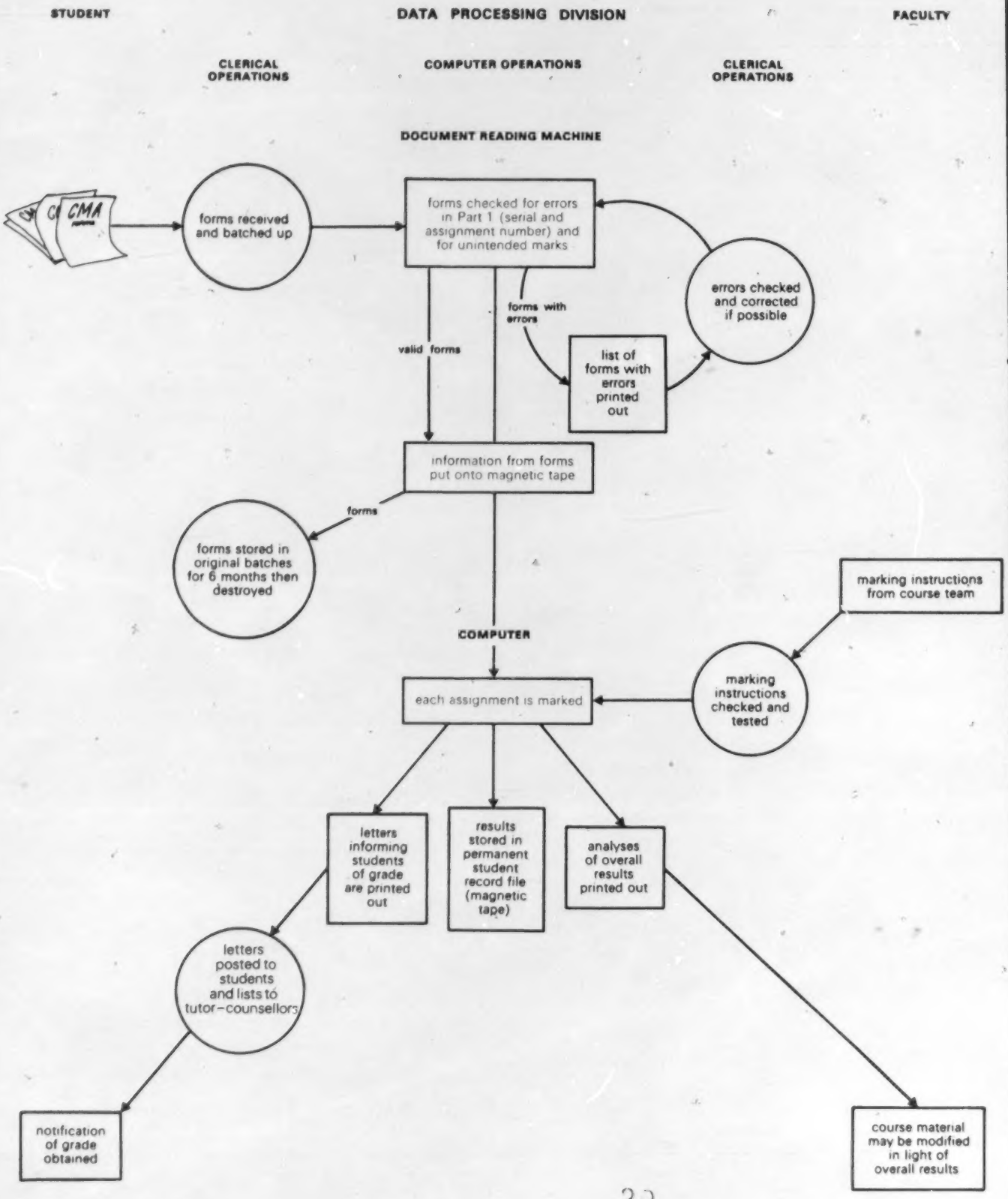
Tutor's No. 24 29

Question Grades

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
30		32		34		36		38		40		42		44		46		48	

Overall Grade 50

TUTOR'S COMMENTS AND ADVICE TO STUDENT


STUDENT
DATA PROCESSING DIVISION
FACULTY
CLERICAL OPERATIONS
COMPUTER OPERATIONS
CLERICAL OPERATIONS
DOCUMENT READING MACHINE
forms received and batched up
forms checked for errors in Part 1 (serial and assignment number) and for unintended marks
errors checked and corrected if possible
forms with errors
valid forms
list of forms with errors printed out
information from forms put onto magnetic tape
forms
forms stored in original batches for 6 months then destroyed
marking instructions from course team
COMPUTER
each assignment is marked
marking instructions checked and tested
letters informing students of grade are printed out
results stored in permanent student record file (magnetic tape)
analyses of overall results printed out
letters posted to students and lists to tutor-counsellors
notification of grade obtained
course material may be modified in light of overall results